

Message Text

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S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0392

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR MILI LA UR
SUBJECT: ALLEGED SOVIET OFFER OF DEFENSE AGREEMENT TO LAOS

REF A VIENTIANE 0358, B VIENTIANE 0109

1. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR FAHMY TOLD ME FEBRUARY 24 THAT A LAO SOURCE OF WHOSE RELIABILITY HE WAS NOT SURE HAD TOLD HIM IT WAS LIKELY THAT WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OR TWO THE SOVIET UNION AND LAOS WOULD SIGN A DEFENSE AGREEMENT IDENTICAL OR ALMOST IDENTICAL WITH THE ONE EXISTING BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND NORTH KOREA.

2. FAHMY DESCRIBED HIS SOURCE AS A "SOUS-SECRETAIRE D'ETAT" IN ONE OF THE LPDR MINISTRIES. HE SAID HE HAD WON THE FRIENDSHIP OF THIS INDIVIDUAL BY ASSISTING HIM FINANCIALLY BUT THAT HE HAD NOT BOUGHT THE SPECIFIC INFORMATION AND COULD NOT JUDGE THE SOURCE'S BONA FIDES. FAHMY SAID HE THOUGHT HIS SOURCE MIGHT WELL FLEE THE COUNTRY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

3. ACCORDING TO FAHMY, SOURCE SAID THAT SOUPHANOUVONG HAD URGED THAT LPDR PERMIT SOVIETS TO DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED BUT PUT NOTHING IN WRITING. SOURCE ADDED THAT
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KAYSONE, WHO HAD AT SOME PREVIOUS POINT IN TIME BEEN A LOW-KEY AND HUMBLE INDIVIDUAL, HAD BECOME VERY AUTHORITARIAN SINCE DECEMBER 1975, AND HAD OVERRULED SOUPHANOUVONG AND AGREED TO SIGNATURE. SOURCE ALSO SAID SOVIETS HAD AN AIRPORT AT PHONGSAVAN WHICH THEY USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. (COMMENT: THIS DOES NOT JIBE WITH ANY INFORMATION WE HAVE FROM

TRAVELERS.)

4. FAHMY SAID THAT HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH USSR/NKOREA DEFENSE AGREEMENT SINCE HE HAD SEEN A COPY OF IT. EGYPT STILL HAD TWENTY OR SO NORTH KOREAN PILOTS SERVING IN ITS AIR FORCE AND EGYPT HAD HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH NORTH KOREA AND THE USSR IN THE PAST.

5. COMMENT: FAHMY, WHO SERVED IN PEKING AND WAS ACCREDITED TO NORTH KOREA AT THAT TIME, HAS BEEN TAKING LINE SINCE HIS ARRIVAL HERE THAT HIS MISSION IS TO WARN THE LAO ABOUT THE SOVIETS. HE PREFACED THE FOREGOING REMARKS TO ME WITH A PRESENTATION TO A VISITING IRIANIAN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WORLD BANK IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE SOVIETS, WHO DID NOT LIKE SADAT, HAD BEEN BEHIND THE RECENT RIOTS IN EGYPT BUT THAT THEY HAD MISCALCULATED. THEIR MARXIST DOCTRINE HAD NO APPEAL TO EGYPTIANS WHO HAD THEIR OWN MOSLEM CONCEPT OF SOCIALISM TEMPERED BY THEIR OWN IDEAS ABOUT PERSONAL FREEDOMS AND THE GOOD LIFE.

6. HE ASKED ME IF I HAD HEARD ANY REPORTS ABOUT SOVIET-LAO DEFENSE AGREEMENT SIMILAR TO THOSE FROM HIS SOURCE. I TOLD HIM I HAD NOT BUT WOULD KEEP MY EARS OPEN. HE ASKED ME IF THERE WERE ANY HOPE THAT LAOS COULD REMAIN INDEPENDENT OF SRV AND USSR. I TOLD HIM HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHY AND IDEOLOGY SUGGESTED LAOS' POSSIBILITIES WERE CLOSELY CIRCUMSCRIBED.

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7. COMMENT: WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT FAHMY IS UP TO OR WHO OR HOW RELIABLE HIS SOURCE IS. WE SHALL TRY TO FIND OUT. HE IS A CLEVER, VOLUABLE MAN WITH A MISSION AND HE MAY OR MAY NOT BE ONTO SOMETHING.
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